

OLYMPIC MIDDLE SCHOOL AREA COMMUNITY MEETING NOTES - FEBRUARY 5, 2009



On February 5, 2009 the City of Auburn Mayor and City staff met with residents of Olympic Middle School area for a community meeting at Pioneer Elementary School, 2301 M Street SE, about crime and safety issues.

Staff in Attendance: MAYOR PETE LEWIS, COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER DUANNA RICHARDS, COMMUNITY SERVICES PROJECT ASSISTANT KIRSTEN REYNOLDS, POLICE CHIEF JIM KELLY, PRINCIPAL PLANNER JEFF DIXON, POLICE SERGEANT HANS KRENZ, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MANAGER SARAH MILLER, PARKS PLANNING & DEV. MGR. BOB WUOTILA, TRANSPORTATION PLANNER TIFFIN GOODMAN, SOLID WASTE CUSTOMER CARE KATHLEEN EDMAN AND CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER MIKE DUNBAR

Community Members in Attendance: KATHY JACKSON, JUDY MOORE, BARBARA LARABEE, MIKE AND DEBRA SWINNEY AND REBECCA PRENOVOST

Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Pete Lewis welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending and asked City staff to introduce themselves. The Mayor then indicated the primary purpose of the meeting was for the City to listen to the residents' concerns, respond to questions they could answer immediately and identify items for follow up. The City takes notes of the meeting, which are then sent out to the attendees.

Mayor Lewis facilitated the meeting and discussed the following topics:

- **Mayor's Update** -- residents were encouraged to sign up for the Mayor's Update, an e-newsletter Mayor Lewis sends out every Friday about what's taken place in the City during the week, upcoming events, etc. He also uses the listserv to send out alerts about road closures, emergencies, etc. as a way to keep the community informed. Since this is a listserv, if you decide you don't want to continue receiving it you can unsubscribe at any time.

General Questions/Comments

- Mayor Lewis talked about this year's group that did the homeless count. The group counted 60 individuals in Auburn that were homeless. For Auburn it's not the time of year with the highest count; during winter they move south. If they do stay in the area they move towards Seattle and Tacoma where more services are located.
- **How many people can live in one home?**
There are no City regulations limiting how many people can live in one home as a family unit.

Public Safety Related Questions/Comments

- **Are kids joining gangs at Olympic Middle School?**
Mayor Lewis explained the City has been having regular meetings about how to prevent gang activity with the Auburn School District Superintendent, Kip Herron. The City and the School District have also formed a Gang Prevention Task Force.

Olympic Middle School has a zero tolerance on violence; if residents are having issues with kids in the neighborhood they should call 9-1-1 and also inform the School of when and where issues are occurring. The School District provides two security officers per a school and the City provides one officer that can look into residents' concerns. If residents are interested in volunteering for the school they always have different opportunities.

- ***Auburn Police***

Auburn has six Police sectors; there are twelve officers out at any given time covering 212 miles of roads, serving 67,000 people in two counties that are divided by two rivers. Police calls are prioritized with threat to life or property first. The Mayor explained that officers won't be found in the Police Station because they are always out in the community in their patrol cars that have been equipped as mobile offices with several computers that give them access to the information they need.

- ***What is the most appropriate way to file complaints with the Police Department?***

Chief Kelly explained if citizens don't agree with how a situation has been handled by an Auburn Police officer they are welcomed to file an on-line report or call and ask to talk with an officer's supervisor for any reason. The Police Department is here to protect and serve the residents of Auburn so a good working partnership between them is vital; residents have played a key part in assisting the Department by testifying in court if they've witnessed a crime. There are very few exceptions when people can be arrested without an officer witnessing the actual crime. Residents always have the opportunity to attend the Citizens Police Academy as a way to be proactively involved.

- ***If you have a problem or see anything suspicious call 9-1-1!***

Residents were encouraged to report everything to 9-1-1. The citizens of Auburn own the 9-1-1 system. You should call 9-1-1 whenever you have an emergency, feel something suspicious is going on, need to speak with an officer or file a report (online reporting is also available at www.auburnwa.gov/Emergency/Police/Citizen_Online_Police_Reporting.asp if you would prefer to file your report that way). **PLEASE NOTE:** If calling from a cell phone you need to ask for an "Auburn Call Receiver."

Auburn shares ownership of the 9-1-1 system with other South King County cities and the calls go to a dispatch center so residents shouldn't worry about tying up the phone line when making non-emergency calls. When you call 9-1-1 it will be answered by a "Call Receiver." The Call Receiver will determine whether or not your call is an emergency to be handled right away or to have an officer make contact with you to file a non-emergency report. They will ask questions which are specifically designed to obtain information so that the proper response can be made for your call.

If you want to know what the officer finds out be sure to let the Call Receiver know you DO want to be contacted by the officer when they've completed their investigation.

In addition to emergency issues, residents should also call 9-1-1 for non-emergency issues such as street lights out, stop lights out, missing stop signs, fireworks, loose dogs, sewer backups, water leaks, etc. An alternative is to report them via the City website. The link is under Online Services at the top of the page and is called Online Citizen Report (half way down): http://www.auburnwa.gov/Business/public_works/Online_Citizen_Report.asp.

- ***Are there Gangs in our neighborhood?***

Police Chief Kelly explained there is a gang presence but very little gang crimes in the neighborhood. The Police have not identified any known gang members living in this area. One resident reported graffiti activity and possible sightings of a White Supremacist Gang affiliation on the corner of G and 17th Street SE. Chief Kelly indicated a White Supremacist Gang presence has been on-going in the general area. The City has started a taskforce in partnership with the Auburn School District; they have been working together to provide more after school programs. There is also a Boys and Girls Club located in this neighborhood.

- ***What should residents do if they have graffiti?***

Police suggested removing graffiti as quickly as possible; gangs have been known to use graffiti to mark their territory for recruitment and claiming turf. The quicker residents can react by removing graffiti the better the chance to decrease the presence of a gang and/or troubled youth behavior.

Property owners and neighborhoods repetitively struggle with this issue. City Code requires property owners to remove graffiti within 15 days; a new Graffiti Removal Assistance Program was created in partnership with Parker Paint to help property owners take action. If neighborhoods are having graffiti problems they should call the City's Code Enforcement Division to report the problem (253-931-3090) or call the new Graffiti Hotline 253 931 3048 Ext. 7, the officer will open a case and call your information into Parker Paint. Residents can go to the Parker Paint in Auburn and pick up supplies to cover the graffiti.

City Council enacted a spray paint law that doesn't allow anyone under 18 years old to purchase spray paint. Individuals caught near a graffiti site with graffiti tools may also subject to arrest under a new Council ordinance. Another new program being explored is to get juveniles previously caught doing graffiti to participate in doing community service specifically focused on graffiti clean up.

- ***Does Auburn have a curfew?***

Auburn's curfew law starts at midnight; residents were encouraged to call 9-1-1 if they see youth roaming the neighborhood late at night. Chief Kelly clarified residents should have a realistic expectation, calls are prioritized by life threatening situations first; officers will respond to the suspicious youth call and investigate why they are out at night. Having a Block Watch group in the neighborhood will help to have more people watching the neighborhood.

Block Watch is built on the concept of neighbors watching out for each other, because they know better than anyone else who belongs in a neighborhood and who doesn't. If you think "maybe I should call 9-1-1 about this," you should. Residents were encouraged to set up a Block Watch. Once the group is formed Officer Gould will come out and have a formal training regarding what to watch for, how to react and how to get more neighborhood participation. It is recommended that Block Watch groups get together at least once a quarter. A gathering could include hosting a National Night Out (NNO) party which takes place annually on the first Tuesday in August. NNO provides an opportunity to increase awareness and safety in the neighborhood; the Mayor and Councilmembers take part in NNO every year.

- ***Disaster Preparedness Presentation***

Emergency Preparedness Manager Sarah Miller talked about several programs citizens can participate in to prepare their homes, families and neighborhoods for disasters. There is a series of classes residents can take called CERT (Community Emergency Response Team); this is an eight week class series where first aid, triage and survival skills are taught. Another

program is Map Your Neighborhood, it helps to get neighbors together and meet with purpose; neighbors are taught how to get prepared before an emergency happens.

The Howard Hanson Dam was briefly discussed; during the big winter storm the level of the reservoir behind Howard Hanson was at the highest level it had been since the dam was built. When the storm was over the engineers found a large depression on one of the banks along side the dam. The City in partnership with the Corps of Engineers held multiple community meetings to educate residents about what happened and what is anticipated to happen from this point on. The Corps said they cannot raise the level of the pool behind the dam as they have done before until they know what caused the large depression and they've figured out how to fix it. When they find the money to fix it that could take 2-4 years, and that's if it is an 'easy' fix. Residents were encouraged to look into purchasing flood insurance regardless if they are located in the "flood zone."

Public Works/Traffic Related Questions/Comments

- ***Can anything be done about parents speeding after dropping off children at school?***

Parents have been reported speeding excessively after dropping off their children. The Auburn School District and City of Auburn are working together to educate parents that this behavior is neither safe nor acceptable. Several residents would like to see speed bumps installed on H Street because it's being used as a cut through to the school.

- ***How is the PhotoSAFE program funded?***

The group discussed Auburn's PhotoSAFE system; Mayor Lewis explained State law allows cameras to be installed only at warranted railway intersections, in school zones and at certain traffic intersections. The Mayor noted there has been a 40% reduction of accidents and not one fatality accident in the PhotoSAFE intersections since the cameras were installed. The Mayor also clarified that while gross receipts from the system were over \$900,000 in 2008, costs to pay for installing and administering the system were over \$740,000. Since the Auburn City Council took action to ensure the net proceeds from PhotoSAFE would go towards neighborhood traffic calming improvements in Auburn's communities, at least \$165,000 in 2008 has gone toward local traffic calming improvements such as stop signs, speed bumps and flashing lights.

- ***Will a stoplight ever be installed at the intersection of A and 21st Street SE?***

The Public Works Traffic Division is reviewing that intersection; it needs to have increased safety revisions.

- ***Save Our Streets***

When the residents of Auburn passed the Save Our Streets (SOS) Program Mayor Lewis vowed to get all the streets in Auburn redone. The program has been progressive; there are only 23 miles left to rebuild under the program. Streets with the least amount of work have been fixed first because the ones in worse condition need to be completely replaced, which cost the most money. The section of road needing to be replaced on C Street and Ellingson runs all the way to 15th Street SW will cost the City \$4.2 million. Residents reported that H Street has a lot of standing water and it should be examined for other traffic calming possibilities.

- ***What happening behind Olympic Middle School?***

The school received grant funding for a Safe Walking Path project. Residents reported a large truck that repeatedly blocks the blinking safe walking path sign by parking in front of it; a no

parking sign needs to be installed eastbound on G Street SE to prevent this sign from being blocked.

Summary of Solutions Discussed/Action Items

- Public Works will look at the feasibility of putting speed bumps on H Street SE.
- Public Works annually reviews the A St SE corridor; previous years have not met warrants. Traffic data for 2009 will be available in summer '09. If warrants are met signal will be programmed and funding will be sought.
- Residents reported a large truck that repeatedly blocks the blinking safe walking path sign by parking in front of it; a no parking sign will be installed eastbound on G Street SE to prevent this sign from being blocked.

Community Services Team contact information:

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